



# 75th Anniversary

1904—1979

Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church

418 Kerr Street NW

Concord, North Carolina



## History of...

# Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church

*Much of the material used in the following history was compiled by the late M. C. Dayvault, who was clerk of the Session at Bayless from 1924 to 1953, and preserved by his son, M. Ira Dayvault*

Around the turn of the century, the Gibson Mill Community was a rapidly growing suburb of Concord, built around three principal enterprises, Gibson Mill, a textile operation which is now Cannon Mills, Plant 6, the Yorke Furniture Factory, located about a mile north beside Southern Railroad, and a gold mine being operated by the Concord Mining Company.

First Presbyterian Church, under the leadership of the Rev. George H. Cornelson, had already established an outreach program which resulted in the organization of McKinnon Presbyterian Church near the Locke Cotton Mill, and responded to the need for another church in the Gibson area.

On April 12, 1901, First Presbyterian Church purchased a lot on the intersection of Cannon and Allison Streets from John C. Wadsworth and wife (one record states that the lot was given) and this was the site where Gibson Chapel, to be known as Westminster Presbyterian Chapel and later as Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church, was built.

Sunday school was held on Sunday afternoons at first, in a building at the rear of Oakwood Cemetery, and teachers were members of First Presbyterian Church.

These included Miss Rosa Mund, Dr. J. S. Lafferty, Mrs. Paul Means, Miss Gertrude Caldwell, F. C. Niblock, Dan Phifer, Miss Rosa Phifer, Miss Eula Parks, Miss Jean Maxwell, Miss Mary Johnston, Miss Kate Archibald, Miss Kate Morrison, Miss Rose Harris, Miss Bertha Hill, Miss Mary Fisher, Mrs. Lucia Parks Stevenson, Miss Julia McConnell, Miss Jennie Nicholson, Miss Mary White and Miss Geneva Parks.

The Rev. W. A. Gillon came to McKinnon Presbyterian Church in 1901 and served both McKinnon and the new Westminster Chapel.

## **New Gibson Chapel prospers during first years**

According to Sessional records at First Presbyterian Church, the work at the new chapel expanded rapidly and by the spring of 1902 there was a pressing need for a seminary student to work here during the summer months.

In March, 1902, trustees of First Presbyterian Church were authorized to contract for the chapel building.

Records dated May 24, 1903, show that negotiations were under way to have a young seminary student named Robert Pryde Bayless to lead organizational efforts in both the Gibson Chapel and another outreach program in China Grove.

A total of \$375 was appropriated by First Presbyterian Church for this work, to continue until September, 1904.

There were indications that this effort by that congregation was truly sacrificial, coming at a time when First Church itself needed a new building.

Bayless spent the summer of 1902 in the outreach work here, then returned to Louisville Theological Seminary in the fall.

He served as student supply until he returned to seminary for his final year of studies in the fall of 1904.

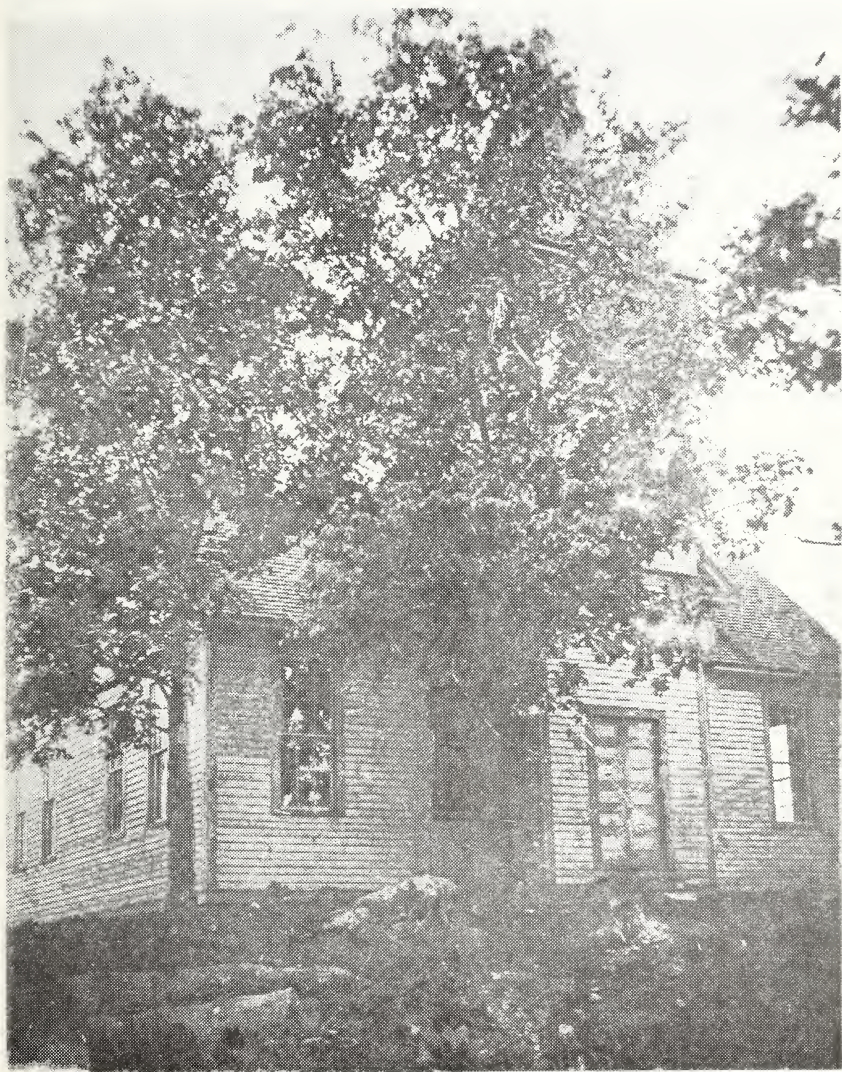
## **Westminster Presbyterian Church is organized**

A commission was appointed by Concord Presbytery to meet in the church building April 13, 1904, to organize Westminster Presbyterian Church.

This group included the Rev. George H. Cornelson Jr., the Rev. W. A. Gillon, the Rev. John Wakefield and Elders P. B. Fetzner of Concord First Church, C. A. Suther of McKinnon and J. C. Thompson of Cannonville (Second) Presbyterian Church.

A charter membership of 34 persons included W. P. Rhinehardt, Mrs. Maggie Rhinehardt, J. G. Petrea, Mrs. Betty Petrea, Miss Edna Cochrane, Miss Mary Eudy, Miss Lee Atwell, Miss Lola Verble, Miss Lilly Beaver, Luther E. Beaver, Charlie W. Beaver, Paul Lewis Beaver, Miss Fannie Brewer, Mrs. Bridget Brewer, W. F. Hess, Mrs. W. F. Hess, Mrs. D. M. Readling, Miss Minnie Readling, John Readling, John Robinson, Miss Rosa Blackwelder and Miss Lottie Culp, who moved their letters of membership from McKinnon;





Westminster Presbyterian Chapel on Allison Street

Also, Edgar Mayhew from Davidson Church, Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Cosby from Bethpage, Mrs. Amelia Corrie Morris from Robinson Church and Mrs. Etta Jones from Cannonville.

Received on affirmation of faith were Mrs. G. T. Eudy, Daisy Shoe, Katie Beaver, Nannie Almond, Ethel Almond, Mattie Almond, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Almond.

G. T. Eudy was received with baptism.

W. P. Rhinehardt was elected the first elder and Luther E. Beaver was the first deacon.

One of the first actions taken by the infant congregation was to issue a call to R. P. Bayless, the seminary student who had been so diligent in working with the chapel during its two preceding summers.

Bayless, not yet out of seminary, accepted the call and was scheduled to arrive in Concord shortly after his graduation that spring.

The choice of Bayless as pastor was a foregone conclusion, because all who knew him said the young Tennessean was a warm and magnetic personality, was energetic and filled with dedication and enthusiasm for his work, and was loved by all who knew him.

He apparently looked forward eagerly to his his work here in his first church.

### Tragedy strikes as first pastor is called

Graduation came and young Bayless prepared to make the long journey, but ironic tragedy entered the picture.

Enroute, he contracted typhoid and stopped over in his home town of Jonesboro, Tenn, to recuperate, but it was not to be.

The young minister died, far from the warm friends who were to have been his first congregation.

The infant church was born in tragedy and orphaned at birth.

Late in 1905, the congregation sadly changed the name of the church to make it a living memorial to the man who would have been its first full-time leader.

During the following years the church made progress under the leadership of the Rev. J. M. Grier, the Rev. Thomas F. Haney, the Rev. L. Hunter, the Rev. J. W. Lafferty, the Rev. J. B. Cochrane, the Rev. T. B. Anderson and the Rev. A. D. Wauchope, who served both McKinnon and Bayless.





Robert Pryde Bayless, 1878 — 1905

Still under the guidance of First Presbyterian Church and Presbytery's Home Missions Board, McKinnon and Bayless discussed separation of the two congregations and Wauchope approached the First Presbyterian Session with this idea.

### **Move to Kerr Street planned for Bayless**

Wauchope suggested that Bayless should be in a more central location and reported that Gibson Manufacturing Company had presented the congregation with a lot for a new building on Kerr Street.

Bayless had raised \$350 toward this project and Wauchope was invited to preach and present the matter to the congregation of First Church.

On Nov. 5, 1913, Wauchope again met with the First Presbyterian Session and said the committee on moving Bayless Church advised the erection of a building 40 by 40 feet in size on the Kerr Street lot and estimated the cost at \$1,575.

The First Church congregation was to pay \$800 of this amount, with the balance to come from the sale of the old property and from the Bayless congregation.

Trustees of the church at this time were Travis C. Eudy, J. Thomas Eudy and John A. Simpson, who was succeeded by R. L. Sloop after Simpson moved out of town for a time.

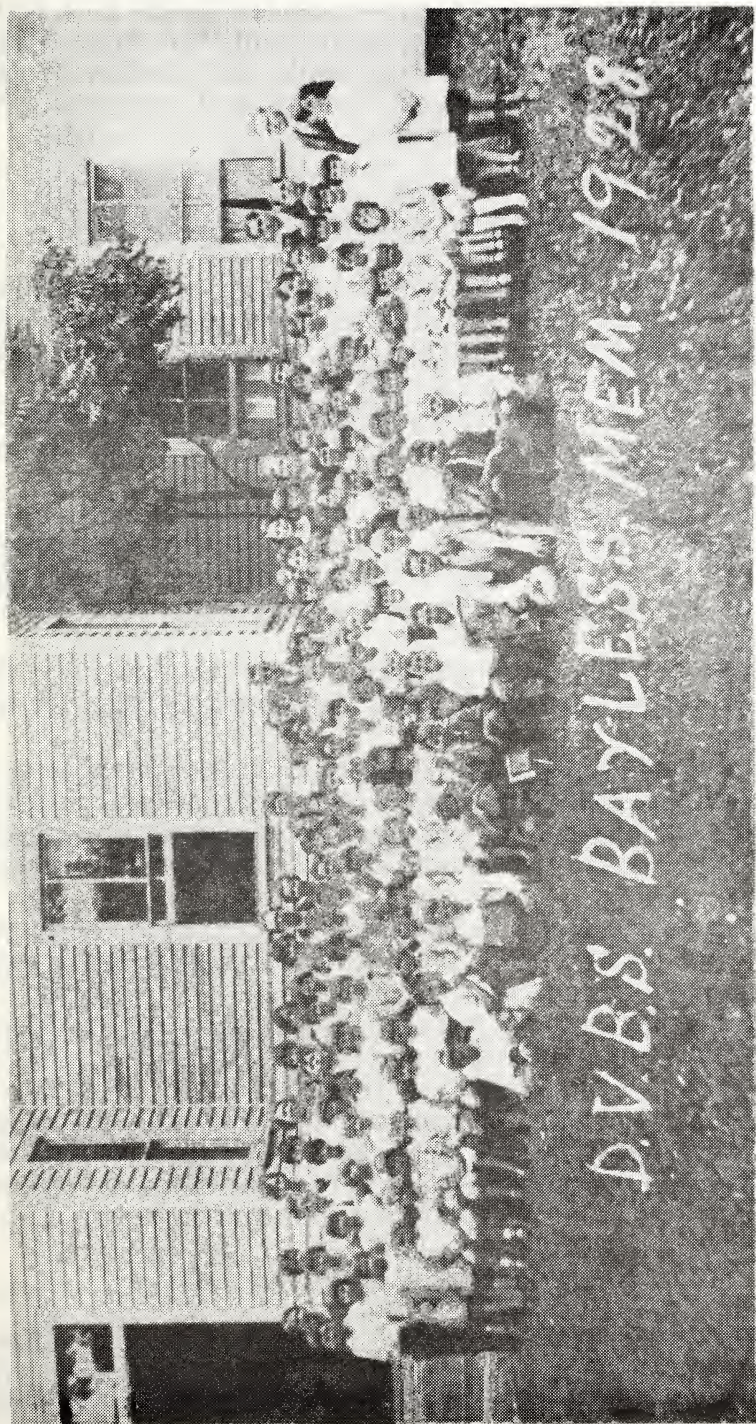
The project was approved and the move to the new location on Kerr Street came in 1915.

### **Growth begins in new location**

On April 6, 1916, the Bayless Session authorized the organization of the Ladies Aid Society, later to become the Presbyterian Women of the Church, and in March 28, 1918, Bayless and McKinnon dissolved their group relationship, with McKinnon becoming self-supporting and Bayless remaining under the Home Missions Board.

During the period from 1915 to 1918, Bayless and McKinnon were served by the Rev. Neil McInnis and the Rev. H. F. Beatty, then in 1918 the Rev. R. O. Lucke was called as Bayless pastor





D.V.B.S. BAYLESS MEN. 1928.

Daily Vacation Bible School during the summer of 1928



From 1921 to 1924, Bayless was served by the Rev. K. L. McIver, who also served Poplar Tent, the Rev. W. H. Matheson, who was a summer supply, and the Rev. Waldo P. Robertson, who served Second and Brown's Mill Presbyterian churches.

### **Storm strikes, damaging church building**

At 5:55 a.m. Thursday, April 2, 1936, a terrific wind-storm passed through Concord, toppling the First Prebyterian Church steeple and inflicting an estimated \$350,000 damage to buildings throughout the city.

The Bayless Memorial church roof was severely damaged and the foyer of the building, with the steeple atop, was left leaning at an angle.

On Jan 20, 1936, a Building Committee composed of C. W. Beaver, Watson Barr, Mrs. S. M. Barr, Miss Brown Beaver, M. C. Dayvault, Mrs. Lula Frye and the Rev. W. P. Robertson, met to discuss erecting a new educational building.

Plans for the new structure were sketched by the minister and were presented to the congregation for approval.

The congregation approved the plan and voted to tear down the old building and erect the educational building so that when the plant was completed at a later date the sanctuary would connect with it, forming a "T" shaped plant.

Work on the new structure was to begin in the spring of 1937, but difficulties in obtaining the additional land necessary delayed the project.

Robertson and volunteers from the congregation, however, began tearing down the old building.

A committee composed of Watson Barr, C. W. Beaver, M. C. Dayvault and John Bost then met with C. A. Cannon to present the church's problem and Cannon offered the congregation a choice of land at the rear of the old church or a new site atop a hill behind the church property.

### **New educational building erected**

The congregation approved the location closest to Kerr Street and work began on the educational building, with services being held in the Long School Auditorium until the new structure was completed in 1938.

Bayless utilized the educational building for both Sunday school and worship during the years from 1938 until the present sanctuary was erected in 1951.

The church became self-supporting Oct. 1, 1945.

Ministers during this period included the Rev. W. E. West (supply), the Rev. Robert H. Cox, the Rev. H. M. Wilson, Dr. Frontis Johnston (supply), the Rev. Al S. Burdette and the Rev. David F. Blue.

The Men of Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church was organized in 1947 and held its first meetings in a room in the educational building.

Shortly after Blue came to Bayless, he began promoting the building of a sanctuary to complete the church plant.

Building and Finance Committees chosen to begin the project included Watson Barr, chairman of the Finance Committee; V. B. Howie, chairman of the Building Committee, M. C. Dayvault, treasurer of the Building Fund; John Bost, Mack Readling, Jack Duffy, C. W. Calloway and Blue.

### Groundbreaking held for new sanctuary

A building plan similar to the sanctuary of Second Presbyterian Church in Kannapolis was chosen and groundbreaking for the \$40,000 structure was held Sunday, Feb. 18, 1951.

Keys to the completed building were turned over to the Building Committee chairman at homecoming, the first Sunday in October, 1951.

The men's organization installed the ceiling in the unfinished basement of the church and equipped the kitchen to complete the fellowship hall.

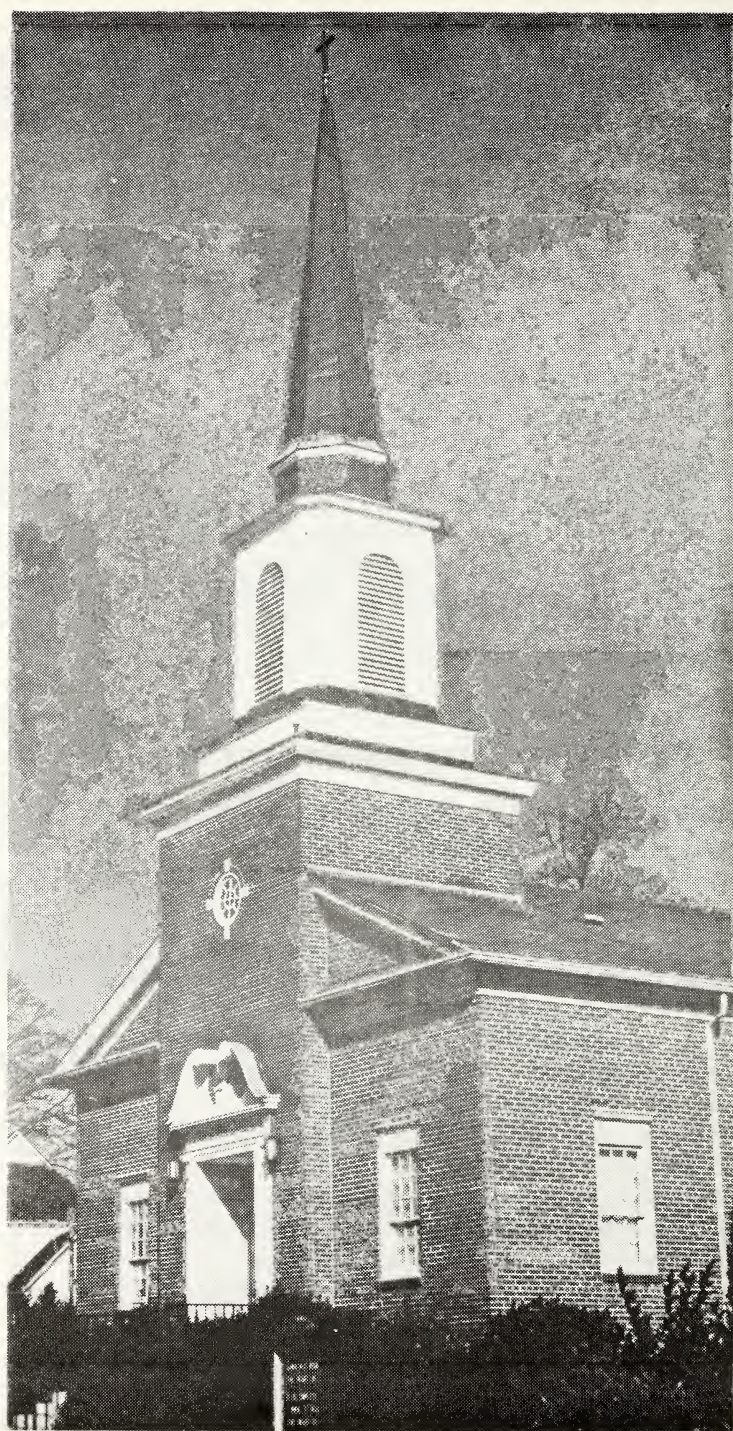
The men also voted to sponsor Scout Troop 40 in 1954 and a cub pack in 1970.

Women of the church sponsored hot dog sales and other events over the years to help pay off the debt on the new building.

Blue resigned as Bayless pastor in 1956 after leading the congregation in eight years of progress and growth.

The Rev. Milton Faust, guidance counselor at the Veterans Hospital in Salisbury, served as supply for the first five months of 1956, then the Rev. Clarence A. Lingle accepted the call to become pastor at Bayless June 1, 1956.





Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church today

Following Lingle, the Rev. H. Middleton Raynal served as pastor from 1960 to 1962 and was followed by the Rev. George W. Alexander Jr., who came to Bayless in October, 1963.

Under his leadership, the "Christian Endeavor" program was inaugurated in 1964.

This was a Sunday evening service led by the church youth which was adopted in place of regular evening worship.

The program opened with a fellowship supper and featured Bible studies, visiting speakers or some other entertaining or inspirational format.

It continues today.

### Progress continuing at Bayless Memorial

Alexander resigned in 1969 to accept the ministry for two home missions congregations which combined to form a new church in Lenoir.

The Bayless congregation sold its former manse on Maple Street in the Parkwood Community and purchased a new one at 740 Gibson Drive in the fall of 1969.

The Rev. Fred J. Harmon accepted the call to become Bayless pastor Jan. 16, 1970, and is at present approaching 10 years as leader of the congregation.

Central air conditioning was added to the manse in 1970 and in the church sanctuary in 1972.

A church activities bus was also purchased in 1970.

In 1975, a committee to launch a major renovation of the entire church plant was appointed, with Steve Christy as chairman.

This \$12,000 project was made a memorial to Manlus D. Readling, lifelong member of Bayless who served as teacher, deacon, elder and church treasurer for more than 37 years. He died Dec. 31, 1970.

The most recent major project to improve the church's facilities was paving the parking lot, which was completed in late summer of 1978.

The Bayless membership has grown over the years from 34 charter members in 1904 to approximately 300 members in 1979, 75 years later.

Many of the church furnishings and fixtures were given by families or individual donors as memorials to family members, friends or loved ones who were members of the Bayless congregation.



The entire church, its program and its service to the community, continues to the glory of God and as a living memorial to a dedicated young preacher who was the personification of love and service for his people:

**Robert Pryde Bayless.**



**Bayless Memorial Presbyterian Church on Kerr Street**





